

VZCZCXRO2931
PP RUEHDT
DE RUEHDT #0125/01 1330810
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P R 130810Z MAY 09
FM AMEMBASSY DILI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4385
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RHHMUNA/USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RULSJGA/USCG HQ WASHDC
INFO RUEHJA/AMEMBASSY JAKARTA 1047
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1279
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0942
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0109
RUEHLI/AMEMBASSY LISBON 1119
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 1005
RUEHDT/AMEMBASSY DILI 3911

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 05 DILI 000125

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PMIN](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [TT](#)

SUBJECT: SNAPSHOT OF U.S. MILITARY RELATIONS WITH TIMOR-LESTE

Summary

¶1. (SBU) Six months after a thorough November 2008 assessment by the U.S. Navy, U.S. Marines and U.S. Coast Guard designed to determine the desirability and feasibility of future U.S. military and security commitments in Timor-Leste, our engagement continues to strengthen steadily. The fundamental objective of our interaction is a stable Timor-Leste better able to provide for its own defense and capable of contributing positively to regional security. Our efforts have had two focal points. First, we have sought to increase our engagement with the key security institutions, notably the military, police and civilian institutions such as the Dili port authority, to raise their technical, leadership and organizational capabilities. Second, we have sought to engage the civilian authorities, including the government, the national parliament, and Timorese civil society to reform and complete the legal infrastructure governing the security sector. In all instances, we have sought to follow the lead of the Timorese and secure full local ownership for reform, and work in close coordination with Timor-Leste's other international partners, especially our allies Australia, Portugal and Japan, and the United Nations. Support from the U.S. Pacific Command has been critical to the progress achieved over the past eighteen months, and institutions such as the U.S. Coast Guard, the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies and the Defense Institute for International Legal Studies have proven to be invaluable partners. The following provides a brief snapshot of pending U.S. activities in support of the development of Timor-Leste's security sector. It also discusses recent changes in Timorese priorities, including the creation of a national maritime authority to coordinate maritime security policy and programs, and suggests how we might best support them. End summary.

U.S. Marines

¶2. (SBU) Lieutenant General Keith Stalder, Commander, U.S. Marine Forces Pacific, was the latest senior U.S. Marine commander to visit Dili. His April 2-3 stopover included meetings with the Prime Minister, Chief of Timor-Leste's Defense Force and the Secretary of State for Defense. LtGen Stalder

received a full briefing from the commander of the Timorese training base on plans to bring in some 600 new recruits in 2009 (see Dili 123). He participated in in-depth planning discussions with the Commander of the Australian-led International Stabilization Force (ISF) and traveled with the ISF Commander to visit one of their forward operating bases in Baucau, Timor-Leste's second largest town.

¶3. (SBU) Near term activities foreseen for Timor-Leste by the U.S. Marines include a major deployment by the Eleventh Marine Expeditionary Unit later in 2009. It will provide opportunities for extensive training interaction with the Timorese military; civilian, engineering or medical action programs; and joint interoperability exercises with the ISF. While in Timor-Leste, LtGen Stalder extended to the Timorese military leadership an invitation to visit U.S. Marine training facilities in the U.S. to receive an in-depth orientation on U.S. basic and advanced military training methods. We hope to realize that opportunity soon. A Timorese offer, first extended by the Chief of the Defense Force, Brigadier Taur Matan Ruak, to Admiral Keating in November 2008, to jointly develop military training areas in Timor-Leste for use by U.S. troops remains on the table.

U.S. Navy

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¶4. (SBU) As of April 25, 2009, a unit of twenty five Seabees from the U.S. Navy's Construction Battalion Forty became fully operational in Dili. Since the Seabees advance team first arrived in Dili in February 2009, the unit's leadership has been focused on establishing its operational and logistical capabilities in Timor-Leste, in addition to securing adequate work and housing facilities for the unit. The introduction to Timor-Leste of the Seabees represents a tripling of the number of official Americans working and residing in Timor-Leste. Embassy Dili is proud to have them here as partners in the effort to speed Timor-Leste's stable development. The unit in the short term will focus on repairing Timorese schools. As future deployments arrive, we would support their mandate being expanded to include the rehabilitation of health clinics, youth centers and perhaps police stations. We will also encourage future engagement with the Seabees by engineers from Timor-Leste's military, and perhaps the addition of a civilian engineering apprenticeship program.

¶5. (SBU) February 2009 saw the travel to Timor-Leste of Seventh Fleet Commander Vice Admiral John M. Bird and the USS Lassen (see Dili 34). The Government of Timor-Leste warmly welcomed their visits and Secretary of State for Defense Pinto, during meetings at USPACOM in March 2009, urged further visits to Timor-Leste by U.S. warships. Embassy Dili is ready and eager to support additional and regular U.S. Navy ship visits in 2009 and beyond.

¶6. (SBU) One of the Government of Timor-Leste's highest priorities has been to improve its maritime security capabilities. Towards this objective, the Timorese government has frequently asked for U.S. assistance, including for a legal advisor to assist Secretary of State for Defense Pinto in maritime security policy formulation and implementation, or to facilitate better coordination of donor support of Timorese naval or coast guard capabilities. More recently, Secretary Pinto has secured the support of Prime Minister Gusmao to create

an interagency National Maritime Authority (NMA) to better coordinate Timorese maritime security policy and programs over its maritime domain and seaports. The NMA would bring together all relevant agencies, including the military, police, port authority, immigration and customs, to develop a national maritime strategy and the organization of an integrated maritime administration. The Timorese government cites both the creation of the NMA and the drafting of a national maritime strategy as 2009 priorities. During his meetings at USPACOM in March 2009, Secretary Pinto requested U.S. assistance specifically towards the creation of the NMA and, in particular, for a legal advisor to support him directly in this effort.

U.S. Coast Guard

17. (SBU) Since 2007, U.S. Coast Guard Mobile Training Teams have held four two-week seminars in Timor-Leste on port security leadership, with Timorese attendees from the Defense Force, National Police, the port authority, customs and other agencies.

Following the November 2008 assessment, the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) was quick to reaffirm its commitment to assisting Timor-Leste by dispatching an officer to participate in a December 2008 Timorese organized seminar on security sector reform. In March 2009, Defense Secretary Pinto met Rear Admiral Manson Brown, USCG Fourteenth District Commander in Honolulu. Secretary Pinto appreciated past USCG training programs towards improving port security, welcomed future assistance in this area, and invited USCG cutters to visit Timor-Leste. Pinto also shared his government's intention to create a NMA and asked RADM Brown for USCG support in its creation. Given that the NMA's ambit will encompass maritime law enforcement, search and rescue, and port security, U.S. Coast Guard support in its creation would be received very positively by the Timorese, and could help ensure and determine that its mission is coherent and realistic.

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National Security Policy Development

18. (SBU) Following the successful September 2008 workshop hosted by the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS) to facilitate the development of Timor-Leste's first national security policy, work in Dili towards completion of the strategy paused while the government completed the draft of a national security law, worked on filling other gaps in law and regulation governing the police and military, and negotiated a framework agreement between the government and the UN on transfer of police command authority. The Timorese government, however, recently identified completion of the national security policy by September 2009 as a national priority. Towards this objective, representatives of the offices of the President and Secretary of State for Security contacted Embassy Dili on May 6 with a request that the U.S. facilitate a second workshop in Dili in mid-June 2009 in order to conduct a final, broad-based local consultation with civic society and other key groups. Submission of a completed policy to the Council of Ministers would follow by September 2009. Given our, and especially the APCSS's, past investment in the development of a national security policy for Timor-Leste, and the trust and confidence that the U.S. and APCSS consequently generated across the Timorese leadership, Embassy Dili strongly encourages and is eager to support APCSS participation in the June 2009 workshop.

¶9. (SBU) The APCSS also invited Timor-Leste to be one of five Asian countries to join an October 2009 seminar on security sector development. We are working with the prime minister to identify appropriate Timorese leaders to join the seminar. Embassy Dili is also in contact with the Defense Institute of International Legal Studies (DIILS) to follow up its landmark July 2008 survey of the legal infrastructure governing Timor-Leste's security sector.

Medical and Humanitarian Mission

¶10. (SBU) The U.S. Air Force will deploy "Pacific Angel," its airborne medical unit, to Timor-Leste in July 2009. Embassy Dili warmly welcomes and will provide full support to Pacific Angel, which will also deploy to Nusa Tenggara Timur (West Timor) in Indonesia. Given the east-west Timor focus of the mission, we believe there is potential to give it a trilateral Indonesia-Timor-Leste-U.S. flavor, underline the U.S. commitment to both countries and boost Pacific Angel's public profile in both Timor-Leste and Indonesia. For example, a remote medical clinic could be placed on an Indonesian-Timor-Leste border location with a ribbon-cutting event attended by leaders from Timor-Leste and Indonesia, as well as military representatives from all three countries. Unfortunately, time does not permit securing the necessary Indonesian military support for such a deployment in 2009. With an eye towards future deployments of Pacific Angel in Timor-Leste and Indonesia, we will pursue a trilateral approach perhaps in FY-2010 with the U.S. Air Force, Embassy Jakarta and U.S. Consulate General Surabaya.

Timor-Leste's security sector priorities

¶11. (SBU) The Timorese security sector leadership, either civilian or military, has suggested the following for future U.S.-Timor-Leste cooperation.

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Legal advice and support: in the past year, we have received repeated requests from the Timorese for a legal advisor to serve alternatively with the National Parliament's commission for security affairs; with the Chief of Defense, Brigadier Ruak; and, most persistently, with Secretary of State for Defense Pinto. Given Secretary Pinto's goal of soon leading the creation of a national maritime authority, an undertaking that could greatly enhance the government's ability to coordinate its management of security programs for the country's maritime domain and its ports, and lead to a more coherent approach towards developing Timor-Leste's maritime security capabilities, we should respond to Pinto's request for a legal advisor as a priority.

National security policy development: As discussed above and previously, the investment the U.S. made in hosting the September 2008 APCSS workshop earned us tremendous credibility and confidence among the Timorese leadership. As the Timorese government prepares a second and final seminar in Dili to secure full stakeholder support for their national security policy, our

leadership and technical contribution is again being sought. Embassy Dili endorses APCSS participation and is eager to support.

Bilateral mil-mil MOU: The Prime Minister, Chief of Defense and Secretary of State for Defense have all requested that a bilateral memorandum of understanding be drafted to memorialize and provide structure to the growing U.S.-Timor-Leste military relationship. Timor-Leste has an active MOU in place with Portugal and is negotiating one with Australia, New Zealand and others. The Timorese government identified completion of a MOU with the United States as a priority for 2009. We do not envision this to be a complex or lengthy document; rather a "plain vanilla" undertaking that would underline mutual aspirations for future bilateral cooperation and establish a framework for regular consultations. Embassy Dili encourages the early drafting of an MOU, perhaps by legal staff at USPACOM, and sharing a draft with the Timorese as soon as possible. (Note: A basic Status of Forces Agreement covering short-term U.S. military deployments in Timor-Leste was signed in 2002.)

Training facilities: Both Timor-Leste's CHOD and its Prime Minister have offered to U.S. commanders the joint development of training areas in the country. During LtGen Stalder's recent visit, he had the opportunity together with the ISF commander to visit some of the more remote areas of Timor-Leste that might be suitable for such development.

Human capital development: The PM and CHOD also have requested additional slots for Timorese soldiers in U.S. military training programs. Our experience is that there is no more effective way to mold a Timorese soldier and prepare him for greater responsibilities than to expose him to extensive military training in the United States. Embassy Dili is working to increase IMET resources to boost the availability of training slots. A major constraint remains, however, the weak average English language proficiency within the Timorese military.

Comment

¶12. (SBU) The above focuses on our military engagement, but the U.S. has also been increasing its investment in strengthening the National Police (PNTL). The Naval Criminal Investigation Service (NCIS) concluded a two week first responder police training program in Dili on May 8 that was exceptionally well received by PNTL commanders. A second NCIS course is planned for later in 2009. The FBI and JIATF-West are

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exploring the development of a long term investigation and intelligence training program that would be targeted at the professionalization of the police, the Prosecutor General's office and other law enforcement agencies. A Department of Justice Regional Legal Advisor will soon arrive in Timor-Leste on permanent assignment to Embassy Dili to further shape and focus U.S. assistance to both the justice and police sectors.

¶13. (SBU) Embassy Dili encourages and is ready to support the further deepening of U.S. military engagement toward the objective of improving Timor-Leste's stability and security, including the professionalization of the Timorese military. As Timor-Leste's government turns its focus to completing its

national security policy and developing a national maritime authority and strategy, timely and focused U.S. support to these efforts could make a profound positive impact. We also support the completion of a bilateral MOU as an expression of U.S. longer term commitment to Timor-Leste's stability and security.

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